(ii) Dependence of State Government on the Food Corporation of India (FCI) for PDS supplies would be reduced.

(iii) Higher local procurement would reduce pressure on freight movement by rail.

(iv) Locally grown varieties, which are preferred by local consumers, will be available through the Public Distribution Network.

(v) Since the consuming States themselves will the procurring foodgrains, there would be no complaints about quality.

(vi) The economic cost of foodgrains to be procured by States would normally be less than the economic cost of the FCI.

Decentralised system of procurement would, thus help the producers as well as the consumers, besides the country as a whole.

(c) Decentralisation of procurement and distribution was one of the items included in the Agenda for the Conference of Chief Minister on WTO Agreement on Agriculture and Food Management held at New Delhi on 21.5.2001. There was no consensus on the issue. A Committee comprising some Union Ministers and Chief Ministers, besides Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, has been constituted to look into, *inter-alia*, enhancing the efficiency of procurement and reducing the cost of distribution of foodgrains under PDS through decentralisation and the active involvement of the States. The first meeting of the Committee was held on 6.7.2001.

Review of food procurement policy

*77. SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Planning Commission has suggested a review of the food procurement policy as surplus production of foodgrains has not helped in eradicating hunger;

(b) if so, whether the food procurement policy has become a vehicle for supporting high prices of foodgrains;

(c) whether a conference "Towards Hunger Free India" organized jointly by the Planning Commission, World Food Programme and MS Swaminathan Research Foundation was held in the month of April, 2001;

(d) if so, what were the main points discussed therein;

(e) to what extent Government are considering to review the food procurement policy; and

(f) by when it is likely to be announced?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE) (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Yes, a Conference on "Towards Hunger Free India" was held between 24—26th April, 2001 in New Delhi. It was organized jointly by the Planning Commission, World Food Programme and MS Swaminathan Research Foundation.

(d) The discussion mainly revolved around the question of ensuring food security to all in India. The different technical sessions, accordingly, deliberated upon the themes of: (i) food availability and vulnerability to national disasters; (ii) food absorption and utilization and (iii) sustainable livelihood and economic access to food.

(e) The Government of India (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution) constituted a High Level Committee for formulating a Long-term Grain Policy for the country in November 17, 2000. One of the terms of reference of the Committee refers to examining the Minimum Support Price (MSP) and price support operations.

(f) The High Level Committee, mentioned above is expected to give its report by September 30, 2001.

Inquiries into the fire incidents in ammunition depots

*78. SHRI R. P. GOENKA:
SHRI K. M. SAIFULLAH:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any detailed inquiries have been instituted into the cases of the recent successive fire at ammunition dumps at Bharatpur, Pathankot,